

President Bush

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The Future of Europe



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Following is an address by President Bush at the Boston University commencement ceremony, Boston, Massachusetts, May 21, 1989.

As Boston University graduates, you take with you a degree from a great institution, and something more—knowledge of the past and responsibility for the future. And take a look at our world today. Nations are undergoing changes so radical that the international system you know—and will know in the future—will be as different from today's as today's world is from the time of Woodrow Wilson. How will America prepare, then, for the challenges ahead?

It's with your future in mind that, after deliberation and a review, we are adapting our foreign policies to meet this challenge. I've outlined how we're going to try to promote reform in Eastern Europe, and how we're going to work with our friends in Latin America. In Texas, I spoke to another group of graduates of our new approach to the Soviet Union [see Current Policy No. 1175, "Change in the Soviet Union"]—one of moving beyond containment to seek to integrate the Soviets into the community of nations, to help them share the rewards of international cooperation.

Change in Western Europe

But today, I want to discuss the future of Europe—that mother of nations and

ideas that is so much a part of America. And it is fitting that I share this forum with a very special friend of the United States—[French] President Mitterrand, you have the warm affection and high regard of the American people. And I remember well, about 8 years ago, when you joined us in Yorktown, in 1981, to celebrate the bicentennial of that first Franco-American fight for freedom. And soon, I will join you in Paris, to observe the 200th anniversary of the French struggle for liberty and equality.

And this is just one example of the special bond between two continents. But consider this city. From the Old North Church to Paul Revere's home nestled in the warm heart of the Italian North End, to your famous song-filled Irish pubs—the Old and New Worlds are inseparable in this city. But as we look back to Old World tradition, we must look ahead to a new Europe. Historic changes will shape your careers and your very lives.

The changes that are occurring in Western Europe are less dramatic than those taking place in the East, but they are no less fundamental. The postwar order that began in 1945 is transforming into something very different. And yet certain essentials remain, because our alliance with Western Europe is utterly unlike the cynical power alliances of the past. It is based on far more than a perception of a common enemy.

It is a tie of culture and kinship and shared values. And as we look toward the 21st century, Americans and Europeans alike should remember the words of Raymond Aron, who called the alliance a "moral and spiritual community." Our ideals are those of the American Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. And it is precisely because the ideals of this community are universal that the world is in ferment today.

Now a new century holds the promise of a united Europe. And as you know, the nations of Western Europe are already moving toward greater economic integration, with the ambitious goal of a single European market in 1992. The United States has often declared it seeks a healing of old enmities, an integration of Europe. And at the same time, there has been a historical ambivalence on the part of some Americans toward a more united Europe. To this ambivalence has been added apprehension at the prospect of 1992. But whatever others may think, this Administration is of one mind. We believe a strong, united Europe means a strong America.

Western Europe has a gross domestic product that is roughly equal to our own and a population that exceeds ours. European science leads the world in many fields, and European workers are highly educated and highly skilled. We are ready to develop, with the European Community and its member states, new mechanisms of consultation and cooperation on political and global

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issues from strengthening the forces of democracy in the Third World to managing regional tensions to putting an end to the division of Europe. A resurgent Western Europe is an economic magnet, drawing Eastern Europe closer toward the commonwealth of free nations.

A more mature partnership with Western Europe will pose new challenges. There are certain to be clashes and controversies over economic issues. America will, of course, defend its interests. But it is important to distinguish adversaries from allies and allies from adversaries. What a tragedy; what an absurdity it would be if future historians attribute the demise of the Western alliance to disputes over beef hormones and wars over pasta. We must all work hard to ensure that the Europe of 1992 will adopt the lower barriers of the modern international economy, not the high walls and the moats of medieval commerce.

NATO: Maintaining Peace in Europe

But our hopes for the future rest ultimately on keeping the peace in Europe. Forty-two years ago, just across the Charles River, Secretary of State George Marshall gave a commencement address that outlined a plan to help Europe recover. Western Europe responded heroically and later joined with us in a partnership for the common defense—a shield we call NATO. And this alliance has always been driven by a spirited debate over the best way to achieve peaceful change. But the deeper truth is that the alliance has achieved a historic peace because it is united by a fundamental purpose. Behind the NATO shield, Europe has now enjoyed 40 years free of conflict—the longest period of peace the continent has ever known. Behind this shield, the nations of Western Europe have risen from privation to prosperity—all because of the strength and resolve of free peoples.

With a Western Europe that is now coming together, we recognize that new forms of cooperation must be developed. We applaud the defense cooperation developing in the revitalized West European Union, whose members worked with us to keep open the seaplanes of the Persian Gulf. And we applaud the growing military cooperation between West Germany and France. And we welcome British and French programs to modernize their deterrent capability and their moves toward cooperation in this area. It is perfectly right and proper that Europeans increasingly see their defense coopera-

tion as an investment in a secure future. But we do have a major concern of a different order—a growing complacency throughout the West.

And, of course, your generation can hardly be expected to share the grip of past anxieties. With such a long peace, it is hard to imagine how it could be otherwise. But our expectations in this rapidly changing world cannot race so far ahead that we forget what is at stake. There's a great irony here. While an ideological earthquake is shaking asunder the very communist foundation, the West is being tested by complacency.

We must never forget that twice in this century, American blood has been shed over conflicts that began in Europe. And we share the fervent desire of Europeans to relegate war forever to the province of distant memory. But that is why the Atlantic alliance is so central to our foreign policy. And that's why America remains committed to the alliance and the strategy which has preserved freedom in Europe. We must never forget that to keep the peace in Europe is to keep the peace for America.

NATO's policy of flexible response keeps the United States linked to Europe and lets any would-be aggressors know that they will be met with any level of force needed to repel their attack and frustrate their designs. And our short-range deterrent forces based in Europe, and kept up-to-date, demonstrate that America's vital interests are bound inextricably to Western Europe and that an attacker can never gamble on a test of strength with just our conventional forces. Though hope is now running high for a more peaceful continent, the history of this century teaches Americans and Europeans to remain prepared.

Soviet Change

As we search for a peace that is enduring, I'm grateful for the steps that Mr. Gorbachev is taking. If the Soviets advance solid and constructive plans for peace, then we should give credit where credit is due. And we're seeing sweeping changes in the Soviet Union that show promise of enduring, of becoming ingrained. At the same time, in an era of extraordinary change, we have an obligation to temper optimism—and I am optimistic—with prudence.

For example, the Soviet Foreign Minister [Eduard Shevardnadze] informed the world last week that his nation's commitment to destroy SS-23 missiles under the recently enacted

INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty may be reversible. And the Soviets must surely know the results of failure to comply with this solemn agreement. Perhaps their purpose was to divide the West on other issues that you're reading about in the papers today. But regardless, it is clear that Soviet "new thinking" has not yet totally overcome the old.

I believe in a deliberate, step-by-step approach to East-West relations, because recurring signs show that while change in the Soviet Union is dramatic, it is not yet complete. The Warsaw Pact retains a nearly 12-to-1 advantage over the Atlantic alliance in short-range missiles and rocket launchers capable of delivering nuclear weapons and more than a 2-to-1 advantage in battle tanks. And for that reason, we will also maintain, in cooperation with our allies, ground and air forces in Europe as long as they are wanted and needed to preserve the peace in Europe. At the same time, my Administration will place a high and continuing priority on negotiating a less militarized Europe, one with a secure conventional force balance at lower levels of forces. Our aspiration is a real peace—a peace of shared optimism, not a peace of armed camps.

Celebrating a Moral and Spiritual Community

Nineteen-ninety-two is the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the New World. So we have five centuries to celebrate, nothing less than our very civilization—the American Bill of Rights and the French Rights of Man, the ancient and unwritten constitution of Great Britain, and the democratic visions of Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi.

And in all our celebrations, we observe one fact: this truly is a moral and spiritual community. It is our inheritance, and so let us protect it. Let us promote it. Let us treasure it for our children, for Americans and Europeans yet unborn. We stand with France as part of a solid alliance. And once again, let me say how proud I am to have received this degree from this noble institution and to have shared this platform with the President of the French Republic, Francois Mitterrand. ■

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